

REMARKS:

In outstanding Office Action, claims 1-16, 21-34 and 36-39 were rejected. Claims 2, 6, 9, 11, 15, 22-24, 26, 32-34 and 36-38 are amended herein, new claim 40 is added and claims 17-20 and 35 remain withdrawn. Thus, claims 1-16, 21-34 and 36-40 are pending and under consideration. No new matter has been added. The rejections are traversed below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112¶2:

Claims 2-16, 22-24, 26, 27, 32-34 and 36-38 are being rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112¶2. Claims 2, 6, 9, 11, 15, 22-24, 26, 32-34 and 36-38 are amended herein to comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112¶2.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b):

Claims 1-3, 7-11 and 22 are being rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,375,183 (Innoue).

Innoue is directed to moving sheets of paper by using a separation roller(s) or a sheet feed roller. In Innoue, a sheet is pressed by separation rollers when the sheet has low rigidity to cause the sheet to bend between an inclined separation plane and the separation rollers (see, col. 4, lines 11-23 and FIG. 3). Further, when a sheet with high rigidity is fed, the separation rollers are pushed upward by the sheet to cause the sheet to be bent at a line in contact with the sheet feed roller (see, col. 4, lines 29-37 and col. 5, lines 57-66). That is, Innoue is limited to moving sheets by the sheet feed roller when the sheets are of high rigidity and moving the sheets via the separation roller(s) when the sheets are of low rigidity.

In contrast, the present invention includes an auxiliary pickup roller that applies a predetermined pressure to each of the plurality of papers. For example, the auxiliary pickup roller applies greater pressure when thin paper is fed than when thicker paper is fed to the feeding stand of the image forming apparatus (i.e., allowing the thin paper to buckle) while maintaining a constant operational force with respect to a main pickup roller.

Independent claim 1 recites, "a main pickup roller to make contact with an uppermost layer of the plurality of papers.." and "an auxiliary pickup roller to apply a predetermined pressure to each of the plurality of papers upon transfer of the plurality of papers via the main pickup roller".

It is submitted that the independent claim 1 is patentable over Innoue.

For at least the above-mentioned reasons, claims depending from independent claim 1 are patentably distinguishable over Innoue. The dependent claims are also independently patentable. For example, as recited in claim 7, "the auxiliary pickup roller operates with the same linear velocity as the main pickup roller".

Innoue does not teach or suggest an auxiliary pickup roller that "operates with the same linear velocity as the main pickup roller"(claim 7) and applies "a predetermined pressure... to each of the plurality of papers upon transfer of the plurality of papers via the main pickup roller" (claim 1 upon which claim 7 depends).

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a):

Claims 4-6, 12-14, 16, 21, 23-33 and 36-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over various combinations of the following: Innoue, U.S. Patent Publication NO. 2002/0113365 (Hsieh), Japanese Publication No. 4-201933 (Seikosha).

Hsieh is directed to an elastic coating covering at least part of a rigid roller to allow a sheet of paper to be fed between the rigid roller and a pressing member pressing the sheet on an opposite side of the rigid roller (see, paragraphs 14 and 15 and FIG. 3).

Seikosha is limited to a vibrating means (4) provided opposite to a feed roller (3) to provide a transport force in an opposite direction using a vibratory action (see, Abstract and FIG. 1).

Independent claim 21 recites, "a separating guide provided to the feeding stand inclined at a predetermined angle" and "an auxiliary pickup roller to apply a predetermined pressure on the plurality of papers", where an exciting unit is provided "to prevent overlapped transfer of the plurality of papers by providing vibration to the plurality of papers".

Innoue, Hsieh and Seikosha, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest application of "a predetermined pressure on the plurality of papers" and "providing vibration to the plurality of papers" to prevent overlapped transfer, as recited in independent claim 21.

For at least the above-mentioned reasons, dependent claims 23-33 and 36-39 depending from claim 21 are patentably distinguishable over Innoue, Hsieh and Seikosha. The dependent claims are also independently patentable. For example, as recited in claim 32, the present invention includes first and second connecting parts "rotatably connected with a

rotational axis of the main pickup roller" and "to which the auxiliary pickup roller is rotatably installed", respectively. The cited references do not teach or suggest these features of claim 32.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIM:

New claim 40 has been added to recite, "an auxiliary pickup roller connected with the main pickup roller via a supporting plate" and applying "a corresponding pressure to each of the papers in accordance with respective thickness of the papers", where "an operating force of the main pickup roller is maintained to be constant regardless of the respective thickness of the papers". The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest these features.

It is submitted that new claim 40 is patentably distinguishable over the cited references.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

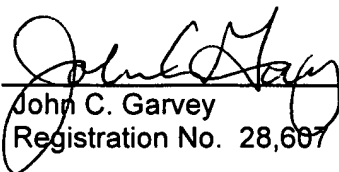
Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 10-6-05

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